

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a meeting of the Scrutiny Committee held in the Darent Room, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Wednesday, 23 May 2012.

PRESENT: Mr R F Manning (Chairman), Mr B R Cope, Mr G Cowan, Mrs T Dean, Mr D A Hirst (Vice-Chairman), Mrs S V Hohler and Mr R J Lees

ALSO PRESENT: Ms S J Carey and Mr B J Sweetland

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr P Sass (Head of Democratic Services) and Mrs A Taylor (Research Officer to Cabinet Scrutiny Committee)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

3. Introduction/Webcast announcement

(Item A1)

- (1) The Chairman welcomed Members to the meeting and for the benefit of the webcast introduced all Members of the Committee and the Division they represented.

4. Election of Vice Chairman

(Item A3)

- (1) Mr Cope proposed and Mrs Hohler seconded that Mr Hirst be elected Vice Chairman.

RESOLVED that Mr D Hirst be elected Vice-Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee

5. Minutes of the meeting held on 29 March 2012

(Item A5)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 29 March 2012 are correctly recorded and that they be signed by the Chairman.

6. Hawkinge Household Waste Recycling Centre Consultation

(Item B1)

- (1) Ms Carey introduced the item explaining that she was the local member for Elham Valley where the Hawkinge Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC) was located. Ms Carey accepted that savings had to be made by the County Council and that the Hawkinge HWRC may have to be closed but the Town and Parish Councils had asked that this issue be discussed by the Scrutiny Committee.
- (2) Ms Carey addressed the points contained within the agenda papers.

Point 5 - the Town and Parish Council had concerns over the questions within the consultation document in that they were leading and in some cases did not sufficiently explain the background.

Point 4 - The Town and Parish Council had struggled to understand how the savings would be made.

Point 3 – Hawkinge HWRC was an older site so data regarding the number of people using the centre had not been recorded and therefore the information available was not comparable with Kent's other HWRCs. Point 2 – the present Town Council would be happy to see extended hours at Hawkinge HWRC.

Point 1 – the Town and Parish Councils were of the opinion that the figures being used were out of date. It was considered that the closure of Hawkinge HWRC had undermined the efforts of the local people to achieve high recycling rates.

- (3) In response to a question, Ms Carey stated that Hawkinge HWRC was open on Saturday mornings but suggested that more people would use the site if it was open all weekend in line with many other HWRCs.
- (4) Mr Sweetland explained that the consultation had been Kent wide in line with the Kent wide review. The response to the consultation was around 45% and had been one of the highest Kent County Council had received. The review had been thorough, there had been updates to the Policy Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings, and an Informal Member Group had been set up which had visited most of the HWRCs in Kent. There had been a public meeting in Hawkinge attended by an officer from KCC and a separate meeting with the Town Council in February.
- (5) Regarding the wording of the consultation questions Mr Sweetland accepted that there had been some confusion in relation to Ashford; however the questions were factually correct. A Member asked whether the consultation documents went through a screening process to ensure they conformed to best practice, the Committee suggested that the Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee be asked to investigate whether the consultation process used by KCC was in accordance with best practice.
- (6) Hawkinge HWRC was due to close at the end of the existing contractual period at the end of summer 2013. In response to a question about whether Hawkinge Town Council might be able to take over and run the centre themselves there was an opportunity for the Town Council to challenge the right to provide under the Localism Act 2011. A Member asked for confirmation that the land would not be sold before the centre closed at the end of summer 2013 – Mr Sweetland gave his assurance that this would be the case. It was understood that Campaign to Protect Rural England would be producing a guidance document in relation to the private running of recycling centres.
- (7) Questions were raised regarding the timing of this item and why it hadn't been raised sooner. Ms Carey stated that she had attended the Member briefing and the public meeting but the fact still remained that Hawkinge Town Council wished to preserve their recycling facility. It was noted that further work would be undertaken by the Town Council to investigate whether there was a route via the Localism Act 2011 to maintain Hawkinge HWRC.

RESOLVED: That the Scrutiny Committee

- (8) Welcome the assurance of the Cabinet Member that the land that Hawkinge Household Waste Recycling Centre currently occupies will not be sold prior to the centre closing in late summer 2013,
- (9) Invite the Policy & Resources Cabinet Committee to consider and assure itself that the County Council's consultation documents are prepared in accordance with best practice, particularly in relation to the wording of questions and public awareness of consultations,
- (10) Guidance should be re-issued to Members informing them of the new decision making process.